Imaginary Voyages in the Eighteenth Century

An
Exhibition
at the
John Carter Brown Library
February 1st - May 1st, 1999

Curated by **Richard Ring**Reference Librarian



IMAGINARY VOYAGES

What constitutes an imaginary voyage? Is it a completely fictional tale, with made-up characters travelling to a fictional place? If parts of it are real (historical events, cultures, or individuals), to what extent is it still "imaginary"? What about travelers who falsify their travel accounts, in part or wholly? Would it be possible to claim that a psychological transformation (i.e., from child to adult, or from unbeliever to believer) is an imaginary voyage? The answer to these questions has long been a subject of speculation, and no-one has been able to settle on a standard definition. This exhibit is intended to display works in the John Carter Brown Library that represent a cross-section of all of the above possibilities, as well as a few more.

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Frontiers inspire speculation, and by 1700 a significant portion of European society knew enough of the New World that it could be used as a compelling setting for stories. Fiction was beginning to develop into the modern novel, and the signature of the novel was realism. This "novel" way of writing stories was becoming a dependable source of income, and fiction had always been a safe vehicle for satire and polemic. The French referred to the genre as "extraordinary voyages," and had been producing books of this type for years. England, however, was recognized as producing the best literature early in the century, and by far the two most famous eighteenth-century imaginary voyages were Robinson Crusoe and Gulliver's Travels.



A New Genre

Daniel Defoe The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe London, 1719

Defoe created a new genre of the Enlightenment novel with Robinson Crusoe, the Robinsonade, which emphasized individual experience rather than the trials of a group in episodes of shipwreck, marooning, and contact with alien cultures. It is the

psychological development of the character of Crusoe which sets him apart from contemporary narratives. It is difficult to over-emphasize the influence of *Robinson Crusoe*, not only on a generic level, but also within the course of English literature and the history of ideas.

Tobias Smollett and Oliver Goldsmith owed much to Crusoe, and Samuel Johnson ranked it

with Don Quixote and The Pilgrim's Progress. Rousseau prescribed it as required reading for a natural education, and Karl Marx used it to explain his theories of labor value. It was immensely popular—going through four editions of 1,000 copies each in the first four months, and by the end of the year appearing in French, German, and Dutch translations. The copy displayed here is the fourth edition, brought out in August, 1719.

Tied for First

Jonathan Swift Travels Into Several Remote Nations of the World . . . by Lemuel Gulliver London, 1726



The popularity of *Gulliver's Travels* rivaled that of Robinson Crusoe. Swift began the work in 1721, and it took four years to complete. *Gulliver's Travels* challenged the superiority of England's social and political institutions, as well as the Enlightenment attitude that humans occupied a privileged position in the Chain of Being. On September 29, 1725, Swift wrote to Alexander Pope that he was "finishing, correcting, amending, and transcribing my travels

... intended for the press when the world shall deserve them, or rather when a printer shall be found brave enough to venture his ears." The edition shown here, published in December, 1726, was the first of over a hundred editions in English (as well as translations in Swedish, Italian, Danish, Russian, and Spanish) produced in the eighteenth century.



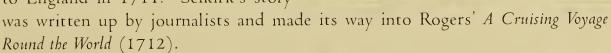
Source for Defoe & Others

William Dampier A New Voyage Round the World London, 1697.

Dampier's New Voyage was almost a bible for writers of fictional voyages. It was quite popular, going through four editions in two years. Robinson Crusoe was thought to have been inspired by the experiences of Alexander Selkirk, a Scottish

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sailor under the command of Dampier who, after quarreling with the captain, asked to be put ashore on the uninhabited Pacific island of Juan Fernandez in 1704. He was picked up five years later by Captain Woodes Rogers, and returned to England in 1711. Selkirk's story



Armchair Traveller

Daniel Defoe A New Voyage Round the World, by a Course Never Sailed before London, 1725

Only briefly believed to be an actual voyage by its readers, the work shown here was primarily a propaganda piece for English South American ventures. Defoe had an active interest in encouraging England to compete with Spain in exploiting the resources of South America, to the extent that he devised colonizing plans for King William and Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford. Most of the information in this work was derived from actual travel accounts like Dampier—in fact the title is an intentional parody of Dampier's *New Voyage*.

Source for Crusoe?

Hendrik Smeeks Des Herrn Juan de Posos Beschreibung des machtigen Konigreichs Krinke Kesmes Delitzsch, [1751]

Another possible source for *Robinson Crusoe* is this work by Smeeks, which operates both as a utopia and a Robinsonade. It is the story of a Dutchman who recounts his early life in the military, his switch to a merchant career, his trips to America between 1679 and 1698, and his assumption of a Spanish identity (Juan de Posos) in order to sail from Panama to the Philippines in 1702 to make his fortune. A storm drives his ship onto the coast of the southern continent (Australia), and he and his scouting party are captured by warriors of an advanced civilization—the kingdom of Krinke Kesmes, an anagram of "Enrikk Smeeks." Later editions capitalized on the popularity of Robinson Crusoe.



On the Coat-tails of Defoe

William Rufus Chetwood The Voyages, Dangerous Adventures and Imminent Escapes of Captain Richard Falconer London, 1720

Chetwood, one of Defoe's booksellers (notice his name on the title-page of Crusoe), capitalized on the success of Robinson Crusoe. Chetwood served as a prompter at Drury Lane Theatre for at least twenty years, and as a dramatist he gained a knowledge of current taste in entertainment. This is one of several picaresque sea adventures attributed to him. The supposed "true" narrative of Captain Falconer is a jumble of piracies and shipwrecks on desert islands in the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico.

Panned by Critic

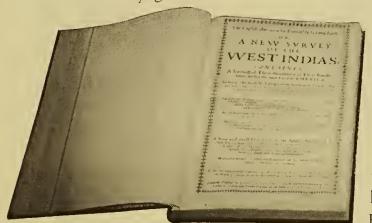
William Rufus Chetwood The Voyages and Adventures of Captain Robert Boyle London, 1728

The first edition of this work was published in 1720, and was certainly another instance of Chetwood's market savvy. The (then anonymous) writer of the work was called a "blockhead, and a measureless, bungling liar" by George Steevens (1736-1800), a literary critic and friend of Samuel Johnson who was known for his sour appraisals. This opinion is an example of the resistance by contemporary academicians to realistic fiction (the "novel"). To them, writing stories as if they were true equalled lying, and deceit had no rightful place in literature.

Chetwood's Source

Thomas Gage The English-American London, 1648

The English Dominican Thomas Gage was almost certainly a source for Chetwood and other "voyage" writers who used the Caribbean as a setting. Although Gage



hated the Jesuits, he was smuggled to the Philippines and on to Mexico with French missionaries of that order, and his descriptions of Spanish-held regions forbidden to Englishmen, with their riches and inadequate defenses, whetted the public's desire for conquest. Gage was later appointed chaplain for an English West Indies expedition that

failed to take Hispaniola in 1654, but succeeded in taking Jamaica—where he died in 1656.



Crusoe Imitation

Pierre Longueville The Hermit: or, the unparalleled sufferings, and surprising adventures of Mr. Philip Quarll, an Englishman London, 1754

This work was considered by some as one of the best imitations of Robinson Crusoe in English. It remained anonymous until a rare first edition (1727) was discovered in 1921, in which the dedication was signed "Peter Longueville." Whole passages of it can be shown to have been lifted from William Dampier, and the famous contemporary essayist Charles Lamb commented, "I do not know who wrote Quarll. I never thought of Quarll as having an author. It is a poor imitation; the monkey is the best in it."

Crusoe Feminized & Moralized

Penelope Aubin The Life of Charlotta Du Pont, an English Lady London, 1723

Penelope Aubin's family had moved to England from France during the Huguenot emigration of 1685. She became the perfect example of a successful Grub Street hack, and was by turns a poet, editor, translator, and dramatist. With more market acumen than literary talent, Aubin produced a series of fast-paced pious romances which told of the triumph of virtue in a hostile world. Aubin promises that her book "contains the greatest Variety of Events that ever was published." Works such as the one displayed here had a significant influence on subsequent novelists—such as Abbé Antoine François Prévost.

Attributed to Defoe

The Four Years Voyages of Captain George Roberts London, 1726

This anonymous narrative begins as a trading voyage from London to the West

Indies, continues as a pirate capture, shipwreck, and survival tale among the Cape Verde Islands, and ends as a description of those islands. It was tentatively attributed to Defoe in 1830, and the controversy about the book continues to simmer. There was a Captain George Roberts, so it



or not Defoe wrote the work is another question, but the most recent critical bibliography (1998) excludes it due to a lack of evidence. Anonymous works attributed to Defoe number in the hundreds.



As noted earlier, the French had an active interest in imaginary (or extraordinary) voyages. Most of the examples of the genre follow Gulliver's Travels rather than Robinson Crusoe. The common theme in these works is the exploration of new social spheres and societies, rather than the development of individual character. A stock encounter for a French hero is a philosophic conversation with a foreigner about the differences in their respective societies.

Dangerous Ideas

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François de Salignac de la Mothe Fenelon The Adventures of Telemachus, the son of Ulysses London, 1787

Fenelon, tutor to the Duc de Bourgogne (the grandson of King Louis XIV), was exiled in disgrace for his teachings, among which were his arguments for the separation of church and state and the elevation of the good of the people above the whims of the monarch. This voyage was written as a pedagogical tool for his pupil, and contained many of the ideas that contributed to Fenelon's exile. Unlike most of the later writers who used foreign geography to displace or hook the reader, Fenelon uses time and myth (the ancient Mediterranean of the Odyssey). The first edition was published in Paris, 1699, as the *Aventures de Telemaque*; the edition shown here is a dual language version, with the original French on the verso and the English translation on the recto.

French Literary Landmark

Simon Tyssot de Patot Voyages et aventures de Jaques Massé Bordeaux, 1710 [i.e., ca. 1715]

Patot is considered by many to be one of the foremost French writers of imaginary voyages, and Jaques Massé is regarded as a landmark in the development of the French voyage novel. The narrative is full of tales of intrigue and romance, and Massé meets (among others) a stoical Chinese persecuted by the Inquisition in Portuguese Goa, and an atheist renegade Huguenot in Algiers. While its sources

are both real and imaginary, this work exhibited significant elements of realism, which was the signature of the "new" (novel) fiction.

Source of Patot

Gabriel Dellon A Voyage to the East-Indies London, 1698

This is an English translation of a true voyage by the physician Gabriel Dellon,



first published in French in 1685. Patot's main character, Jaques Massé, seems to be patterned on the real Dellon. They are both physicians, both get captured by pirates, and both lose two crew members on the same island (Ile Bourbon). The most compelling parallel is Dellon's description of the Inquisition at Goa, to which the fictional Jaques Massé is also subjected. Dellon's account was so popular that he expanded it in later editions.

Another Patot Source

Jean Mocquet Travels and Voyages into Africa, Asia, and America, the East and West-Indies; Syria, Jerusalem, and the Holy-Land London, 1696

This is the first English translation of Jean Mocquet's Voyages (Paris, 1616), which also seems to have influenced Patot's Jaques Massé. The main parallel centers around the Inquisition at Goa. Mocquet mentions a talkative Chinese man whom he met at Goa; similarly, while awaiting his trial, the fictional Jaques Massé has a long discussion with a Chinese man about the Jesuit missions in China.

The First of its Kind

Simon Tyssot de Patot La vie, les aventures, & le voyage de Groenland du Révérend Pere Cordelier Pierre de Mesange Amsterdam, 1720

This, the first French imaginary voyage set in the far north, grew primarily out of Patot's Jaques Massé. The main character, Mesange, suffers ill fortune (including meeting the author's father!) until he joins the crew of a Dutch whaling vessel in 1669. The ship gets caught in the ice and, after a few narrow escapes, Mesange and a few companions arrive in Greenland. The natives take them to an underground city, the hero learns the language and the history of the Greenlanders, discovers the North Pole, and is banished for refusing to marry an extremely ugly relative of the king. His escape from Greenland with two companions is followed by adventures in Iceland, Denmark, Poland, and (finally) Germany.

Subterranean Voyage

Relation d'un Voyage du Pole Arctique au Pole Antarctique par le centre du monde Paris, 1723

This anonymous work, published three years after Patot's Voyage de Groenland and obviously taking advantage of the popularity of north polar voyages, contains a twist: an arctic whirlpool sucks the hero and his companions into the center of the earth. The illustration

shown here is one of several decorative but nonsensical images inserted in the book.



Son of Gulliver

Pierre François Guyot Desfontains Le Nouveau Gulliver, ou Voyage de Jean Gulliver, fils du Capitaine Gulliver Paris, 1730

Desfontaines (1685-1745) was a French critic and translator who, despite his conservatism about the "new" writing in France and England, managed to take advantage of the market by translating Gulliver's Travels and by writing this story about Gulliver's son.

Life Mirrors Art

Antoine François Prévost Le Philosophe Anglois, on Histoire de Monsieur Cleveland Amsterdam, 1744

First published in 1731, this immensely popular novel centered on the amorous adventures of Cleveland, the supposed illegitimate son of Oliver Cromwell. Cleveland chases Fanny, his beloved, through Rouen, Cuba, Virginia, Florida, and finally Cuba (again), in what is perhaps the speediest expedition through colonial America ever recorded. The life of Prévost read like his novels. Twice a Jesuit, a Benedictine monk, a soldier, then a Protestant convert, Prévost was always running from political and religious authorities, his publishers, and even his father, who threatened to blow his brains out for repeatedly breaking his monastic vows.

Standard Formula

Antoine François Prévost Voyages du Capitaine Robert Lade en differentes parties de l'Afrique, de l'Asie et de l'Amerique Paris, 1744

The later novels of Prévost, like the one shown here, all contain common traits. Using a fluent, attractive style Prévost freely alters history, has his characters discourse at length on their feelings, and creates situations in which the morality and philosophic acumen of his characters

are tested. One of the reasons Prévost is not remembered today is that his books were preoccupied with contemporary issues, rather than with "timeless" themes. The fold-out map, an expensive addition for a publisher, indicates the desire of

novel-readers to be supplied with geographical context.

Based on a True Story

Alain René le Sage Las avantures de monsieur Robert Chevalier, dit de Beauchene, Capitaine de Filibustiers dans la Nouvelle France Paris, 1732

Le Sage is most famous for his adventure story Gil Blas (1715), a lengthy comedy of manners that influenced many writers of the eighteenth century. The adventures



of Robert Chevalier (shown here) relate the career of a man who was born near Montreal and raised by the Iroquois, and is based on a real account.

There was a lull in the popularity of imaginary voyages after Defoe's death in 1731. For two decades the genre saw a decline, until it experienced a huge wave of popularity from 1750 to 1760, when the Seven Years War (1756-1763) and the importance of the Caribbean colonies to European commerce drew more focused attention. After 1760 and continuing to the end of the century, writers maintained a steady production of works in the genre. These later imaginary voyages often corresponded to current events, and tended to construct frameworks for moral and philosophical instruction, or to provide platforms for theories of social reform.

Critique of Justice

Isaac Bickerstaffe The Life, Strange Voyages, and Uncommon Adventures of

Ambrose Gwinnett Hudson, 1786

This tract, attributed to Isaac Bickerstaffe and first published in 1750, uses the life and adventures in the Caribbean of a wrongly accused man as an argument against the use of circumstantial evidence in criminal trials. Bickerstaffe was a dramatist who briefly enjoyed associations with the brightest literary stars of the time—Oliver Goldsmith, Samuel Johnson, James Boswell, and David Garrick among them. In 1772 he came under suspicion

of committing a capital crime, and fled abroad. The last reports of him (1812) described a man "poor and despised of all orders of people."

Tales of Virtue

Edward Kimber The Life and Adventures of Joe Thompson London, 1750



Edward Kimber
The Life, Extraordinary
Adventures, Voyages, and
Surprizing Escapes of
Captain Neville Frowde,
of Cork London, 1767



Edward Kimber

The History of the Life and Adventures of Mr. Anderson Berwick, 1782

Edward Kimber (d. 1769), a novelist and a compiler for booksellers, apparently eked out a paltry living and died almost destitute. The three novels shown here





were written to "instill virtue in the readers . . . not to celebrate badness." The running theme in many of Kimber's novels is the triumph of the natural talent and luck of young heroes (representing the common man) over the evil imposed by older, morally corrupt adults (representing established order), ideas that interested

many people in the years preceding the French Revolution.

Entrepreneurs (I)

The Female American; or, the Adventures of Unca Eliza Winkfield London, 1767



Francis and John Noble, booksellers and publishers, established one of the first circulating libraries in London in 1739. Some books were published by both firms, like the one shown here. This is the story of a female Robinson Crusoe in Virginia. This work was published after purportedly being found among the

papers of the editor's late father—such fictions contributed to the verisimilitude of the stories.

Entrepreneurs (II)

Daniel Defoe's Voyage Round the World by a Course Never Sailed Before... London, 1787



This 1787 version of Defoe's armchair voyage, its content adjusted to the times, was re-written by Francis Noble and is an example of how booksellers profited by the lax restrictions on literary piracy in the eighteenth century. Defoe's account of Patagonia and its potential as a colony is replaced by a description of Botany Bay

in Australia, as depicted in the voyages of Captain Cook in the late 1770s.

Entrepreneurs (III)

The Voyages, Travels, and Wonderful Discoveries of Captain John Holmesby London, [1757]

This satire of European policy, cloaked as the adventures of a Captain John Holmesby, was also a creation of Francis and John Noble. The main action takes

place on a Pacific island-nation called Nimpatan. Supposedly created by a great whirlpool long ago (the plant life was "generated" from hardened slime), Nimpatan is inhabited by a race of noble savages who live to be "three thousand moons" (over 200 years). Among the maxims of this nation are: "All measures are lawful to gain a crown"; "Cover your ambition, lust, or

avarice, with a show of love to your country"; and "Do you want to invade any nation? Swear that it assisted your enemies. The pretence will do."



Thriller

The Voyages, Distresses, and Adventures of Captain Winterfield London, 1800

The fictional captain Winterfield undergoes adventures that rival today's thrillers. He survives the Battle of Bunker Hill, "where so many British officers seemed cruelly selected for slaughter"; he fights with Indians; he is saved from being eaten by his shipmates (who decide to eat his black slave instead); and he is sold into slavery after being captured by a Portuguese Man o' War.

Eventually he gains his freedom. This is an eighteenth-century equivalent of the dime novels and "penny dreadfuls" that were so popular in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Mutiny!

The Voyages and Travels of Fletcher Christian, and a Narrative of the Mutiny, on board His Majesty's ship the Bounty, at Otaheite

London, 1798

Fletcher Christian was master's mate on the Bounty, and the leader of the mutineers against Captain Bligh on the morning of April 28, 1789. The work shown here purports to be a series of letters from Christian before, during, and after the mutiny. According to the *Dictionary of National Biography* the book is an "impudent imposture," which is likely, since many passages are obvious copies of Bligh's own published account.



Posthumous Fame

Robert Paltock The Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins, a Cornish Man London, 1784



This is the only novel (and single claim to fame) of Robert Paltock, which was first published in 1750. It fell rather flat in the eighteenth century, but the Romantics of the early nineteenth century admired it so much that its place in literary history was assured. Its most interesting fantastical element is a race of people who fly—the men are "Glumms" and the women, "Gawreys." Wilkins

(the hero) is shipwrecked on an island, and is swept down a cavern while exploring. Following a five-week subterranean journey he arrives in an Eden-like country, falls in love with a Gawrey named Youwarkee, and after a time decides to "civilize" the natives by introducing gunpowder, concepts of money and trade, abolition of slavery, and the Christian religion. Patlock critiques the benefits of such civilization by showing Wilkins' reservations about his cultural interference.



Baron Munchausen

Gulliver Revived; containing singular Travels, Campaigns, Voyages, and Adventures... London, 1787.

Gulliver Revived: or, the Vice of Lying Properly Exposed... London, 1793

Gulliver Revived; containing singular Travels, Campaigns, Voyages, and Adventures...
Massachusetts, 1800

The adventures of Baron Munchausen is popular to this day, as witnessed by the

film of the same title directed by Terry Gilliam (1988). The first (unknown) and second (1786) editions sold few copies, but an enterprising bookseller bought the copyright and added fourteen new chapters, which contained topical allusions to English institutions and recent books of travel. The best guess as to

authorship is Rudoff Erich Raspe, who was a librarian,

scholar, and journalist. Raspe's inspiration

was an old soldier named Hieronymous von Munchausen (1720-1797), who developed a habit of telling wildly outlandish tales with a straight face in order to divert his guests. Raspe was a prolific writer and translator and drew from a wide base of expertise, but the

popularity of Munchausen did not occur until after his death. Shown here (left to right) are two of the most successful editions, as well as Nicholas Brown's (John Carter Brown's brother) own boyhood copy.

Utopia, meaning "no place," is generally understood as an ideal world in a social, political, cultural, linguistic, and even geographical sense. Most imaginary voyages contain utopian elements, and some even have fully developed utopias as their narrative core. The genre has traditionally been used as a critique, through satire or comparison of contemporary norms. In the eighteenth century, as European interests abroad gained momentum, the use of utopian elements in imaginary voyages provided a flexibility essential to writers' speculation on the potentialities of human society.



The Utopia

Sir Thomas More. [Utopia] Habes candide lector opusculum illud vere aureum Thomae Mori non minus utile quam elegans de optimo republicae statu, deque noua Insula Utopia Paris, 1517

Although Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (first published in 1516) was written 200 years before Robinson Crusoe and the other imaginary voyages in this exhibit, its influence on them was profound. "Utopia" has as its elements the Greek ou topos, or "no place." The first known utopia in western literature can be found in Homer—Phaeacia in the Odyssey. Sir Thomas More invented a completely new literary form by isolating this idea, and creating the utopia. Written in Latin and addressed to the learned community in the sixteenth century, More's *Utopia* had among its champions the great humanist scholar Erasmus.

Voyage + Utopia

Joseph Hall Mundus Alter et Idem Utrecht, 1643

First published in 1605, this work by Joseph Hall is the figurative meeting-place of two traditions, one dating from classical times (the

Menippean tradition), and the relatively new utopian tradition. Mennipus was a freed Phoenician slave who founded a style that parodied Homer and exoticism in general. This was followed by Roman writers such as Seneca, Petronius, Varro, and Lucien, and later by humanists such as Joseph Hall. Hall's

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work carried on this tradition, mocking exploration and discovery by using an allegory of a man's voyage through life. The "hero," Mercurius Britannicus, voyages to the great Southern Land (assumed by many cartographers to exist in order to "balance" the northern lands), only to find himself abandoned in a world of moral failings. Shown here are the allegorical regions of the Southern Land—Pamphagonia (gluttony), Ivronia (excessive drinking), Moronia (land of fools), Viraginia (amazons), and many others.

Lunar Utopia

Daniel Defoe The Consolidator: or, Memoirs of Sundry Transactions from the World in the Moon London, 1705

A "tacker" (or "consolidator") was one who favored attaching other bills in Parliament to money bills, to ensure their passage through the House of Lords. This work by Defoe was a critical response to the attempted tacking of the Occasional Conformity bill to a finance bill of 1704. If it had passed, this bill would have



excluded all who worshipped outside the Church of England (Dissenters) from public office. The narrator journeys to the moon in a chariot made of 513 feathers, corresponding with the 513 members of Parliament, where he finds many parallels to the goings-on in England: a dispute between the Solunarians (Church) and Croalians (Dissenters); a similar controversy with an Occasional bill; the question of who should rule Ebronia (Spain—alluding to the War of the Spanish Succession); and a Shortest Way with the Croalians, which refers to a Tory tract against the Dissenters, the message of which was to kill them all.

[On loan from the John Hay Library]

Frivolous France

Abbé Gabriel François Coyer A Discovery of the Island Frivola: or, the Frivolous Island London, 1750



The island of Frivola is constructed as a critique of France. The inhabitants of the island (Frivolites) write poetry and romance, and care nothing for scientific learning, mineral wealth, or military strength. The fruit on the island is pretty, but unsustaining, and the animals have claws that only tickle. Supposedly this work

is a narrative of a sailor serving under Admiral Anson, who's popular *A Voyage Round the World in the Years 1740-1744* was published in 1748. In the book shown here, Anson and his crew discover that Frivolia was once a great nation, until French colonists arrived and infected the capital (the city of Wit) with Parisian fashions.

Philadelphia as Utopia

Voyage de Robertson, aux terres Australes, traduit sur le manuscrit anglois Amsterdam, 1766

This is the first edition of what pretends to be a French translation of the journal of an Englishman who sailed to South America with Sir Francis Drake. We are told that the natives in these "southern lands" live "la vie douce et innocente" (a sweet and innocent life), and that the narrative of these events inspired William Penn to found an ideal city in British North America. This thinly veiled political essay is cast in the form of a philosophical odyssey—one of a number of such works that appeared in France mid-century.



Fuel for Revolution

Louis-Sébastien Mercie L'An deux mille quatre cent quarante London, 1771

Louis-Sebastien Mercier (1740-1814) was a playwright who produced almost 60 drames bourgeois (middle-class dramas), and wrote this novel, in which an eighteenth-century Rip Van Winkle falls asleep and wakes up in the year 2440, where he finds himself in an ideal nation-state. Variously attributed to Rousseau and Voltaire, "The Year 2440" remained anonymous until the



mid-1780's, although Mercier was the suspected author by 1774.

The book was strictly banned in France, and hugely popular. It was routinely smuggled in, or printed in France with a false title-page to obscure the imprint, as is the suspected case here. One conservative estimate is that 18,000 copies were in print in three languages by 1772, and perhaps 63,000 copies existed at the time of Mercier's death.

First English Translation

Louis-Sébastien Mercier Memoirs of the Year Two Thousand Five Hundred London, 1772

This is the first English translation of Mercier's novel, which did not become truly popular in England until the end of the century. Hooper, the translator, explains that he changed the year from 2440 to 2500 "for the sake of a round number," and claims that this is the only significant (if idiosyncratic) alteration from the French original. Mercier predicts that "the names of the friends, the defenders of humanity, shall live and be honored, their glory shall be pure and radiant; but that vile herd of kings, who have been, in every sense, the tormentors of mankind, still more deeply plunged in oblivion than in the regions of death, can only escape from infamy by the favor of inanity."

First North American Utopia

Louis-Sébastien Mercier Memoirs of the Year Two Thousand Five Hundred Philadelphia, 1795

This first American edition of Mercier's novel, based on Hooper's translation, was not very popular, but it was the first utopian novel published in North America. George Washington owned a copy, and Thomas Jefferson had a copy of a 1771 French edition in his library (now in the Library of Congress).



Spanish Interest in Utopia

Zaccaria Seriman Viages de Enrique Wanton a las tierras incognitas Australes y al pais de las monas Madrid, 1781

This Spanish translation of an Italian work, first published in Venice, 1749,



contributed to Spain's sudden interest in accounts of utopian societies in the 1780s. Possibly this interest came from the entrance of Spain into the American War of Independence (1779) with the promise of territorial expansion—Spain seized Florida, Honduras, and Minorca in 1782. Spanish interest in imaginary voyages was certainly galvanized by the first free flight of a balloon

with human passengers in France on November 21, 1783. Translated and expanded by Joaquin Vaca de Guzman y Manrique, this work is meant to be a "sharp satire of vices, in which all nations abound."

Utopian Church

A Conference between a Bensalian Bishop and an English Doctor, Concerning Church-Government London, 1681

This anonymous tract is a fictional transcription of a discussion between an English doctor and a Bishop of Bensalia. "I was cast upon that happy country of Bensalia," the doctor begins, and we are told little else about the country itself besides the workings of its church. The tract is addressed to the Church of England in general and the Archbishop of Canterbury in particular, from Theophilus Do-Well (Bishop of Bensalia). While not strictly speaking a utopia, the work uses utopian elements in order to "compare" the actions of the Church of



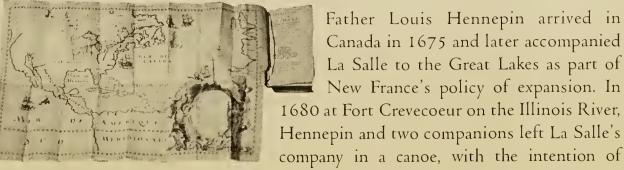
England with that of Bensalia—the target result being a vituperative attack on church practice in England, specifically episcopal abuses.

Real travelers who went to real places and published their accounts inspired the writers of imaginary voyages because of their books' popularity. Some of the most popular real voyages, however, contained falsehoods of varying degree. It was an accepted commonplace that travelers exaggerated when they told their tales—a tradition which can be traced back to Strabo, who claimed that "every man who describes his travels is a liar." The motivation behind such a phenomenon ranged from wanting to liven up a story, to trying to sell more books, to practicing deception for a silent agenda.



Niagara Falls (x 3)

Louis Hennepin Description de la Louisiane, nouvellement deouverte au Sud Ouest de la Nouvelle France Paris, 1683



exploring the northern Mississippi for water routes to the Pacific. After being captured by the Sioux Indians and later rescued by a fur trader, Hennepin returned to Paris and published the tale of his travels. Aside from occasional boasting and minor invention, his largest exaggeration was the report of the height of Niagara Falls, which he claimed was 500 feet (later editions put it at 650 feet). The highest part of the fall, 167 feet, is on the American side.

Stolen Glory

Louis Hennepin Nouvelle Decouverts d'un tres gran pays Situe dans l'Amerique, entre Le Nouveau Mexique, et Le Mare Glaciale Utrecht, 1697

Hennepin published this book for monetary gain and political favor by adding more material to his first book. Broke and in political disfavor, Hennepin attempted to secure the leadership of an English expedition by claiming to have reached the mouth of the Mississippi two years ahead of La Salle. Since the book was written ten years after La Salle's death, he could claim this without much fear of reprisal. If he is to be believed, it took Hennepin a scant 40 days to travel roughly 2000 miles (more than half of that upstream) in a canoe propelled by three oars. The fact that Hennepin lifted many descriptions from an actual eye-witness account of La Salle's voyage added insult to injury, as did the immense popularity of his book.

Stolen Glory, part II

Louis Hennepin Nouveau Voyage d'un Pais plus grand que L'Europe

Utrecht, 1698

This book continued the hoax, and it was almost as popular as his earlier titles. Not until Jared Sparks, the historian-President of Harvard, published his biography of La Salle (1844) did the scholarly community generally accept La Salle as the discoverer of the mouth of the Mississippi. The fact that

Hennepin was honored by legitimate scholars until the mid-19th century, and by staunch supporters until the early 20th century gives a sense of his influence.



One Better

Louis Armand Baron de Lahontan Nouveaux Voyages de Mr. Le Baron de Lahontan, dans l'Amerique Septentrionale Paris, 1703

New Voyages to North-America London, 1703

Two years after Hennepin claimed he had beaten La Salle down the Mississippi, Baron Lahontan went one better and invented an entirely new river. Lahontan served as a marine lieutenant in Canada at the age of seventeen and assisted in the Indian wars there. After talking with the survivors of La Salle's last expedition, Lahontan made an exploring trip into the northwest in search of the elusive passage to the Pacific, the fabled El Dorado, or something equally exciting. Ten years later, after seeing Hennepin's success, Lahontan wrote his own travels, in which he described his discovery of a great river that flowed from the northwest into the Mississippi. Too big, too long, and too straight to be the Minnesota, its junction too far north to be the Missouri, the imaginary "riviere longue" had as an added attraction three completely invented tribes of Indians. The first French edition is shown on the left, and on the right is the first English translation.

So geographers, in Afric maps
With savage pictures fill their gaps,
And o'er uninhabitable downs
Place elephants for want of towns.

Swift's lines express the cartographer's quandry when it came to mapping unknown places. The traveler had a similar problem when faced with describing places he had never really visited. As the mixture of truth with fiction makes fiction more believable, likewise the mixture of fiction with truth can make the truth more palatable. In the latter case, the line between forgivable exaggeration and actual deceit becomes blurred when writers employ such methods in telling "true" tales.



American Eden

Charles de Rochefort Histoire Naturelle et Morale des Iles Antilles de L'Amerique Rotterdam, 1681

Rochefort wrote parts of this work to encourage French protestants to settle in America. The city of Melilot (shown here) was supposedly located in the kingdom of Apalache, and home to a



group of Europeans who had been driven from the Virginia colony. In this happy valley they lived peacefully with the Indians and freely practiced their religion. It was precisely this kind of utopia, embedded in "legitimate" narratives, which drove the fascination that eighteenth century readers had with ideal societies and imaginary voyages to them.

Real Man, False Tale

Matthew Sâgean The Original Manuscript Account of the Kingdom of Aacaniba London, 1755

First written in 1701, this clearly fantastic account apparently created some interest in high French circles. Sâgean was an uneducated Canadian who claimed to have been a member of La Salle's expedition. He explains that he was separated from the main party and discovered a civilized country that enjoyed a perfect climate year-round and overflowed with gold. This edition was apparently a propaganda piece to generate English interest in conquering the territory, and another example of the persuasive power of the imagery of Paradise in describing the New World.

Reads Like a Novel

Jean G. Dubois-Fontanelle Naufrage et Aventures de Monsieur Pierre Viaud Bordeaux, 1770

Pierre Viaud was a real person who left St. Dominique (Haiti) as a passenger on a merchant ship bound for New Orleans on January 2, 1766. His story, instantly popular upon publication, has been treated both as a novel and as a real event, and is still debated (its most recent editor assigns it more truth than fiction). A storm blew Viaud's ship off course and onto a sandbank near Dog Island off the coast of Florida. There were 15 survivors; six of these—the captain, his wife and child, his business partner, a black slave, and Viaud—were taken by Indians, robbed, and marooned. The captain and his partner drowned while attempting to reach the mainland in a rotten canoe. The remaining four fashioned a raft, left the boy behind because he was ill, and set out for the mainland. Four days later a starving Viaud killed the slave, and he and the captain's widow ate him. After ten more days they were rescued, as was the boy a bit later.

